

## **NESAC Notes from January 2000 Forum**

*Tuesday, January 25<sup>th</sup>*

### Introduction and Agenda Review

Patti High (Chair, OK) brought the meeting to order and reviewed the agenda.

### Crime and Violence Working Group Report

Annette Barwick (FL) and Bill Smith (SD) distributed the initial report and Ms. Barwick updated the group on progress since last July and briefly explained the achievements that the Working Group hopes to realize (once it becomes a Task Force).

The initial report needs to be revised to include 6 objectives:

1. How to use data to make a difference (A process to use)
2. Define data elements and develop common definitions that address Federal reporting requirements
3. Expand disciplinary action list to include alternative disciplinary actions
4. Provide definitions of school level incidents that are not crimes
5. Strategies to increase reliability and validity of district data
6. Develop strategies to address dissemination of the report

The Working Group members have heard presentations and feedback from many groups in efforts to update this report.

Lavan Dukes (FL) moved approval of a task force; Steve King (WY) was the second. The Task Force was then unanimously passed.

There will be an e-mail review on the Product Guide. After this second approval, the newly approved Task Force will be fully funded.

### Discussion of Race/ethnicity

Patti High (Chair) asked for reactions to opening remarks about race/ethnicity. She briefly recapped recommendations made by the Educational Information Advisory Committee (EIAC). Various comments ensued:

- Patty Bowles (UT) discussed how the Census is responding to this question and noted some confusion about ethnicity/race issues (as well as the 2-question format).
- David Uhlig (VA LEA) asked why a binary system is not used (for ease and simplicity).
- Steve King (WY) responded that the issue is not the system itself, but rather tabulation.
- Kelly Powell (AZ) noted the problem of inference for race/ethnicity.
- Steve King responded that the key was to figure out how to split these categories without consistent guidelines for tabulation.
- David Uhlig noted the disjuncture between LEA and state perspectives.
- Judy Thompson (CT) emphasized the importance of making decisions as quickly as possible.
- Patti High suggested that states should get 3 years between the finalization of the decision and implementation.

- David Burnett (SC) asked whether or not the categories would be ones that had to be kept at the state level or ones solely provided for NCES.
- Steve King responded that, when the guidelines come out, they will be those for the Department. He then asked whether or not the federal government has announced reporting transition systems.
- Patti High noted that EIAC recommends re-surveying (rather than keeping old categories).

### **Joint NESAC and PPI Meeting**

Roundtable Meeting with Edith McArthur of NCES, Kimberly Jenkins of the Office of General Council, and a representative from the Office of Civil Rights.

- Patti High (NESAC Chair) asked Edith McArthur (NCES) what she meant by the race/ethnicity categories?
- Ms. McArthur answered that there are still 6 race/ethnicity categories, White, Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Asian and Hispanic. The decision on whether to ask for race/ethnicity using 1 or two 2 questions may be left up to the group collecting the information. The one-question format would include Hispanic, with respondents checking all that apply; the two question format would pull the Hispanic out of the Race group and would ask a second question on Hispanic Ethnicity. The next issue is how to aggregate the data, and specifically, how to fold Hispanic in as a race group. Technically, Hispanic is an ethnicity, though it has historically been treated and tabulated as a race. Following a tangential question, USED representative noted that the only recommendation on the table is the 1 or 2 questions issue.
- David Uhlig then asked Ms. McArthur to enumerate the categories.
  - 1) those checking one and only one of five R/E (Hispanic not included)
  - 2) those checking the following combinations: W/B, W/A, W/AI, B/AI
  - 3) those who checked other combinations of R/E
  - 4) those who did not check any of the five R/E
  - 5) those counted in each of the tabulation groups in #1, #2, #3 and #4 who ALSO checked Hispanic
  - 6) those counted in each of the tabulation groups in #1, #2, #3 and #4 who DID NOT check Hispanic
- Patti Bowles noted that comparability will be lost in this transition (and that this has happened many times before of course); she also noted that many anthropologists believe Hispanics to an ethnicity rather than a race.
- Ms. McArthur noted that this new system would be good because new combinations would become possible.
- Steve King asked Ms. McArthur what she thought about the fact that EIAC is pushing for re-survey. She answered that this recommendation makes sense, but that the federal government cannot mandate it. In addition, once the decision is made, NCES will need 3 years for full implementation (and the states' transitions will be complicated).
- Many states expressed their frustration and disappointment that OMB is still studying the issue and has not come out with the guidelines yet.

### **Finance Task Force Update**

Lavan Dukes noted that the Center desperately needs to update 2R<sup>2</sup>, it was last updated in 1990. Lavan said the original schedule had the revision being printed in July 2000 but GASB has not come out with their revisions and this is holding up the Handbook and the Task Force's work.

The Task Force is currently in hibernation until GASB finishes but has been advising on the updating of the handbook.

#### Finance Task Force Update

Patti Bowles has looked over definitions for ‘student capacity’ and has been working on updating the Data Handbook (circa 1977). National experts on school facilities were brought in to review the work to-date and consult with the task force. Patty was pleased to report that after many months of struggling with issues of safety, security, technology and the adequacy of facilities, the task force finally "got wind in their sail and have left the dock." They hope to have a drafted an outline of the School Facilities Handbook by July.

#### Report on the Joint Meeting of Finance, Facilities and Technology Task Forces

Patty Bowles noted that the Finance, Facilities, and Technology Task Forces met in an effort to avoid overlap. Further, all products developed thus far by the three groups are going to be put on the Forum Web site (hopefully by July) in draft form for review by Forum members and others by invitation. She noted that the Finance, Facilities, and Technologies Forces met in an effort to avoid overlap. Further, all products developed thus far are going to be put on the Forum Web site in draft form.

#### Student Handbook

Beth Young (NCES) distributed a handout about the Student Data Handbook. She told the group that the Handbook was finished and currently in external review—it will be published as an update and released to the public at the upcoming MIS conference (March). In fact, the updates to the Handbook will be published annually.

Participant asked how new legislation would be folded in to the updates. Ms. Young answered that the original team would review all new relevant legislation. Steve King asked whether or not new legislation would use the codes in the revised Handbook. Ms. Young answered that the Chief Information Officer of the Department may endorse the Handbook. David Uhlig asked if the Handbooks could be endorsed for vendors. Ms. Young responded that vendors have gotten together to create software and TDC is trying to understand all of these issues and make sure that the Forum is not left out of Vendor conversations. She summed up by adding that TDC will do a customer service survey that would be used as a state resource for online data collection, recording, warehousing, and student level record systems.

#### Student Record System Report from Handbook

Beth Young (NCES) talked about Chapter 3 from the Student Handbook—the Forum, EIAC, and a Basic Data Element Focus Group asked that smaller, more, user-friendly products come out. She noted that the authors suggested adding real life examples and checklists. She then opened up the floor for feedback. Suggestions were as follows:

- Chapter/booklet could be very helpful for vendors.
- Need what the basics of a system are.
- Three or four members lauded the chapter for being well written and clear.

- Notes about homegrown versus package software as well as a warning about duplication of information.
- Small booklet format is okay
- Examples and checklists might be okay, as long as they don't make the product too big.
- References to counter resistance were needed.

Beth Young proposed that the volunteer group meet via e-mail. The first round of suggestions are due at the end of February by NESAC members; then it will be resubmitted to the email group with changes incorporated in March; email group will get a few weeks with it and then the final changes will be incorporated and it will be send back to NESAC in early July. David Uhlig (VA), Bob Rocker (OH), Bethann Canada (VA), and Steve King (WY) volunteered their time. She also asked the group is they wanted to see a formatted draft in July (yes) and if NESAC should ask 1 member each from both PPI and TDC to read the draft (yes).

### Staff Handbook

Oona Cheung (CCSSO) distributed a handout about the Staff Data Handbook. She noted that there was a very large list of data elements and that the intent is to look at key questions and indicators.

Next, Beth Young (NCES) solicited suggestions for elements that merit inclusion in the Handbook, suggestions were as follows:

- National teacher certification,
- Group pay scales (already included),
- Attendance (already included),
- Mentoring,
- Recertification,
- Institutional school information (included elements in previous draft),
- Functional classifications of staff,
- Teacher assignment: core courses,
- Teacher assessment,
- Common definitions, indicators, derived data elements, and
- Use of contractors (currently being looked at in Finance).

Volunteers were recruited to work on the Handbook.

### Follow-up on Race/ethnicity Issues

Kelly Powell summarized some issues:

- Update of race/ethnicity debate;
- Possibility of requesting lead time of 2 full school years to implement new system;
- Issue of compatibility among systems.

After brief discussion, an informal motion to request 2 years lead time from OMB was approved. (The Forum or PPI will formally request this.) In addition, NESAC members agreed that the Forum need not create a task force for advising recommendations.

*Wednesday, January 26<sup>th</sup>*

## **NESAC/TDC Joint Meeting**

### TLCF Online Collection

Libby Farris (Westat) gave an introduction for Nancy Speicher (Westat) (the latter present via a conference call). Ms. Farris noted that the Department had requested an online data collection system, which was developed last year. After this first year, Westat met with representatives from some states (CA, UT, KA, MI, TN, VA, OH, MO)—the presentation will focus on feedback from these representatives and changes implemented.

Ms. Speicher first summarized some identified online issues:

- Importing data;
- Online edits (hard versus soft);
- Validation issues (entering and approval);
- Computer platforms (PC, Mac, Linux) and browser configurations;
- Technical assistance;
- Multiple sessions and users (turning a system on and off, access issues);
- Printing;
- Process of submitting and editing; and
- Issue of approximating process of making notes in the margins electronically.

Ms. Speicher then discussed the focus group sessions and the feedback elicited. She also noted some changes made to facilitate a more user-friendly experience. Examples include: moving navigation bars to the top, expanding text boxes, and adding an administrative section for up-to-date status reports.

A few questions were then asked. Answers are summarized as follows:

- Timing out: The current system does not time out; rather, some users want to stop and start a session many times, or to perhaps share the task with others. Realizing this has allowed Westat to work to ease any such problems.
- Firewall: There are no problems with Westat's firewall.
- Multiple Access: Multiple users cannot access the same form at the same time.
- Password: Once submitted, a form is considered as mailed and a user's access rights, i.e., password, are changed. In extreme cases, a user is permitted additional access after submission.

In closing, Beth Young noted that states, when asked, definitely felt that this new system was well worth any growing pains that it may have (or cause).

### Common Core of Data (CCD) Longitudinal File

Lee Hoffmann (NCSE) introduced Sameena Salvucci (Synectics) and offered a brief overview of the trajectory of this project. Work has (or will) take place in 3 phases: 1) matched agency files for the past 10 years were imputed; 2) matched school files for the past 10 years were imputed; 3) all files will be turned over to the American Institutes for Research (AIR), where researchers will check to see if the 2 files match—this will then be a research file.

Semeena articulated the expected outcome of this project: analytic CCD files will become historical data for researchers. She then gave a PowerPoint presentation that covered necessary first steps (such as creating consistent variable names, value labels, operational codes, and master IDs) and also focused on technical aspects (such as collapsed codes that needed to be ordered, equations used, and the treatment of spikes).

The benefit is that the data can be viewed in various ways. The agency research files are currently on the NCES Web site. This project will be at the July Data Conference.